

Housing Options Planned for Persons with MI

In August, Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (DMHDD) Commissioner Elisabeth Rukeyser announced the Creating Homes Initiative (CHI), a plan to expand affordable housing options in local communities for Tennesseans with mental illness.

Speaking at the welcoming session of the Community Development 2000 housing conference in Knoxville, the commissioner said more than \$3 million included in the 2001 state budget and tied to the Creating Homes Initiatives (CHI), will be used to provide housing for an estimated 500 individuals with serious mental illness.

“Many people with mental illness who could live in the community can’t leave our mental health institutes or other inpatient settings because they have no place to go,” she said.

The commissioner said the plan, developed by the department’s Office of Housing Planning and Development, calls for task forces to be created in local communities. Each is to include representatives from key

community agencies — funding sources, foundations, architects and homebuilders, advocacy groups, service providers, realtors, and federal, state and local agencies concerned with housing and community development.

“Our mission is to successfully partner with local communities to educate, inform and expand quality, safe, affordable and permanent housing. We believe that by working through these groups, we can combine our allocated funds with other resources and serve an increased number of people,” she said.

The plan is to be implemented in two phases. Phase one begins in September with task forces being organized in Chattanooga, Memphis, Jackson and Nashville. Phase two, scheduled to begin in July 2001, includes Knoxville, Clarksville and Johnson City.

“Our real goal is to change the current housing situation for people with mental illness in Tennessee. Through intention, strategy and collaboration with the community, we can create 2005 housing options by the year, 2005,” she concluded.